

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 85

By McNally

A RESOLUTION relative to influenza vaccination for children.

WHEREAS, the most effective strategy for preventing influenza is annual vaccination;  
and

WHEREAS, beginning with the 2008-2009 influenza season, annual vaccination of all children aged six (6) months to eighteen (18) years is recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), as well as the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP). Annual vaccination of all children aged six (6) months through eighteen (18) years should begin as soon as vaccine is available in the 2008-2009 influenza season, but should be initiated no later than the 2009-2010 season. Strategies that focus on providing routine vaccination to persons at higher risk for influenza complications have long been recommended, although rates of flu vaccination among the majority of these groups remains low; and

WHEREAS, during the 2007-2008 influenza season there were eighty-seven (87) reported pediatric deaths caused by influenza in the United States. Influenza is the most frequent cause of death for a vaccine-preventable disease in the United States and is responsible for an average of 200,000 hospitalizations each year and an estimated 36,000 deaths, primarily in the elderly; and

WHEREAS, according to the AAP, the ACIP's expanded recommendations target all school-aged children, the population that bears the greatest burden of disease and is at higher risk of needing influenza-related medical care compared with healthy adults. Moreover, the AAP states that reducing influenza transmission among school-aged children will in turn reduce transmission of influenza to household contacts and community members; and

WHEREAS, influenza vaccine should be offered to all children as soon as vaccine becomes available prior to the start of the season and should continue into March and beyond, as there is often more than one (1) peak in influenza illness during the same season. Thus, the AAP states that vaccination through May 1 can provide protection and widen the window of opportunity for children who need two (2) doses of vaccine to receive same; and

WHEREAS, school-based vaccination is an efficient venue for the mass vaccination of school-age children against influenza. Moreover, school-based vaccination programs benefit the communities in which they are conducted by helping reduce transmission of influenza to other members of the community. The potential threat of an influenza pandemic underscores the benefit of building out local infrastructure and strengthening community partnerships as preventive measures to address both seasonal influenza and the event of an influenza pandemic; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED SIXTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that it is the sense of this General Assembly that extending the influenza vaccination season both earlier and later may help vaccinate and therefore protect children, adults, and especially those in high risk groups. This General Assembly believes strongly that it is important during this influenza season that all citizens in Tennessee be protected against this dangerous and potentially deadly disease.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that in order to improve the state's childhood immunization rates for influenza and comply with the recommendations of the National Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices for influenza vaccination, the Department of Health is urged and encouraged to:

- (1) Review and enhance current immunization activities to focus on vaccination of all children ages six (6) months through eighteen (18) years of age, who are recommended for an influenza vaccination by the National Advisory Committee for Immunization Practices (ACIP);

(2) Increase immunization awareness by publishing on the department's web site information about the benefits of annual immunization against influenza for all children recommended by the ACIP;

(3) Work with appropriate state agencies and licensed child care facilities to ensure that the information on the benefits of annual immunization against influenza for children ages six (6) months to eighteen (18) years of age is annually distributed to parents in August before influenza season begins;

(4) Work with health care professionals and public health organizations to develop plans for expanding outreach and infrastructure to achieve the ACIP-recommended target vaccination of all children aged six (6) months to eighteen (18) years of age; and

(5) Explore the use of schools and alternative venues to administer influenza vaccine to children in a timely manner.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that a certified copy of this resolution be transmitted to the Commissioner of Health.